{ See Note at end. }

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THE NEW ORTHODOXY.

I.

A PAPER BY H. M. SIMMONS.

Read before the Western Unitarian Conference at Chicago, May 15, 1884.

Orthodoxy, a word as old as Aristotle, originally meant right opinion. But the broad Greek term in time contracted to mean the special opinion prevalent in the Christian church. It is now defined in dictionaries as belief in the doctrines of the Bible. But in common usage, it has been narrowed still more and applied to a special system of doctrines which has but small place in the broad Bible, and which some do not find there at all. These doctrines, as summed up by the whole Evangelical Alliance in 1846, and re-affirmed by its American branch in 1867, are: the authority of the Bible, the trinity, "the utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall," the atonement of Christ; the justification of the sinner by faith alone, and the consequent "eternal blessedness of the righteous and eternal punishment of the wicked."

To see how these doctrines have been taught, and what need there was of their reform, we may turn to the two chief statements of English-speaking Protestants.

The Thirty-nine Articles declare that by Adam's sin human nature became so corrupt that "in every person born into the world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation;" that hence the Son, who was also "the very and eternal God," was in Christ crucified "to reconcile his father to us;" and that those who say man can be saved otherwise than by Christ's name "are to be had accursed."

The Westminster Confession repeats the same doctrine, but with still more stress on the corrupt nature and cursed condition of man, and on God as the cause of this. It

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says that God not only allowed our first parents to sin, but that he did it with pleasure on purpose to enhance his glory; —or in its own words "their sin God was pleased to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory." But though the deed thus glorified God, he condemned as guilty those who did it,—and equally so those who did not; or, in the words of the Confession, "the guilt of this sin was imputed to all their posterity," and so man became "bound over to the wrath of God." The Westminster Shorter Catechism for children of tenderer feeling, is still more severe, and says that "all mankind are under his wrath and curse," and that even the innocent Christ underwent "the wrath of God;" and the Larger Catechism declares that Christ had to undergo "the infinite wrath of God." Even Christ's sacrifice only partially pacified this wrath. For even professing Christians if "not elected," the confession says, "cannot be saved; much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever;" but all these, the great mass of mankind, "God was pleased to pass by and to ordain to dishonor and wrath." And the effect of this wrath is made clear, where the confession says that the sinners are to suffer "grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission in hell-fire forever."

Such are the doctrines and words of the orthodox standards. Nor are they by any means obsolete. The milder statement of the Thirty-nine Articles is still kept by the Episcopal church and in abridged but not materially altered form by the Methodist. The severer Westminster Confession was with little change of its doctrinal parts embodied in the Savoy declaration of the Congregational church; and the Professors at Andover have every five years had to renew their subscription to the doctrines "as summarily expressed in the Westminster Shorter Catechism." And all the Westminster standards are still used exactly as above quoted, by the great Presbyterian church, whose every minister, elder and deacon has to affirm that he does "sincerely receive and adopt" that confession of faith.

It seems too that a by a large class these doctrines are not only professed but fully believed. In the *North American Review's* recent symposium on "the Revision of Creeds," the Lutheran, Dutch Reformed and Methodist writers did not admit any material departure in their respective churches from the old faith. And Dr. Howard Crosby, an acknowledged authority in his denomination, speaking of those Westminster standards above quoted, said, "I know of no Presbyterian minister or person who does not accept them as an entirety, although they think that some of the words might be improved." He said: "That scientific discoveries have in the slightest degree contradicted the Scriptures, I deny *in toto;*" and "the Bible and the creeds have been assailed in the name of science by worldly men of every age, but they have never been harmed and never will be." Such long has been and still is the common Orthodoxy.

But many in the Christian church think very differently of both creeds and the Bible. By the side of Dr. Crosby's communication was one from Dr. Potter of the Episcopal church, who thought the creeds differed so much from the beliefs of many who held them, that it was doubtful whether they could be revised; and in the same church and *Review*, Heber Newton has since gone further and denied the authority of not only creeds but of the Bible. Of the Congregational writers in the same symposium, Newman Smyth thought the church should not only give up its old creeds but never try to make another; and Mr. Beecher spoke rather contemptuously of creeds as for the most part "the tombstones of dead beliefs." And now a commission from the whole Congregational church has formulated a somewhat milder statement, and many of its clergy have endorsed it. So in one form and another has arisen a

New Orthodoxy trying to be truer to the name and to restore right doctrine in religion.

Welcome to it! A New Orthodoxy was needed, first in the name of *sincerity*. For many of these professed beliefs are held altogether too lightly. Many profess them without disbelieving them, but also without having given them enough thought to really believe them,—and perhaps sometimes without even knowing much about them. Lord Brougham used to tell of the member of the House of Commons who one day spoke of the sanctity of the Sixty-nine Articles. "Thirty-nine," said a member, correcting him. "Well," replied the speaker, "sixty-nine or thirty-nine, I am for the Articles." Probably some of the common church zeal is simply "for the articles," and without very clear idea how many or what they are. Then, besides the mass of church members who give the doctrines little thought, are probably some who actually doubt them. I once heard a serious preacher tell his hearers, that if there was but one chance in ten of his doctrines being true, they had still better accept them, and be on the safe side. Probably some do this, —like the bride Aldrich saw in the Vatican about to have her wedding ring blessed by the Pope, and saying, "Of course I'm not a Roman Catholic, you know, but if there is anything efficacious in the blessing, I don't want to lose it,—I want to take all the chances." Perhaps some look out for the chances in this world as well as the next, and seek the church that offers most of them, without caring what its creed may say. With many people thrift goes further than theology. I read of some Mohammedans who had confounded Christianity with polytheism, and so sent word to Gen. Skobeleff in the war that if he would spare them, they would believe in as many gods as he ordered, up to twenty-four; and I almost believe the story when I see how many of even our own Boston Unitarians who are supposed to be grounded in the belief in one God, change their faith when they move to a town where it is more respectable to recognize three. Some besides seem to stand conscientiously by the prevalent religion for the sake of peace, however they may disbelieve it,—like the English Chancellor of the story who said to the arguing dissenters, "I support the Established church because it is established; get your miserable religion established, and I'll support that." In short there is probably much truth in the common charge of insincerity in the church; and if that 16th century German, Froude tells of, should to-day test the believers by setting fire to their building to see how many would stay, it is possible that not so many would be martyred by being burned in the church as by being crushed in getting out. Sometimes indeed the disbelief goes beyond the mere creeds; and F. M. Holland recently told us of a church which he knew, among whose five vestrymen were "a Quaker, an Agnostic and an Atheist."

Now such insincerity, if enriching the church, ruins religion. However allowable elsewhere, it ought to be banished from this sacredest field. What irony in keeping the word creed—*I believe*, for a statement which I disbelieve; and what worse than irony in men worshiping God through doctrines which they deny, and sentiments which they are ashamed to speak in the streets! The multiplication table is sacreder than a disbelieved confession, and its use in the counting-room more religious than the repetition of a liturgy in which you have to lie. Landor makes Cardinal Antonelli say: "We have lied, but it is for the glory of God and for the exaltation of the church;" and the Andover professors regularly signing a creed which they smiled at, are supposed to have been inspired by the same policy. But there is more religion in Mr. Savage's criticism of them: "If it becomes necessary to lie for the kingdom and glory of God, then I propose to become a citizen of some other kingdom, to seek the glory of some other

power." "Salvation by sincerity," says Adler, and that surely is the best. Carlyle thinks pious lies the worst of all, and calls cant "the second power of a lie." In the name of sincerity, then, we welcome the efforts of the New Orthodoxy to clear the church of doctrines that are disbelieved.

We welcome it also in the name of *piety*. For some of these doctrines are positively impious, and bad as it is to profess them insincerely, it is almost more so to do it sincerely. Religion should honor its God, but these doctrines dishonor him. The catechism begins wisely by saying that men ought to "glorify God and enjoy him forever;" but, as Geo. Macdonald says, if its authors had gone no further, they would have glorified God more, and many men would have enjoyed him sooner. The Methodist Articles of religion, adopted in 1784, aiming to say piously that we can do nothing good without the grace of God coming first to prepare us, unfortunately used the word "prevent" in its old sense of coming before, and so now reads that "we can do no good work without the grace of God preventing us." But the impiety lies deeper than language, and the divine grace taught in the old theology seems to have done all it could to prevent good. Think again how Deity is represented in those Westminster standards:—being pleased to permit the sin of Adam, and then punishing it; punishing it not only in him, but in countless millions who never heard of it or him; bringing all mankind under his curse; adding to the curse his wrath; then instead of undoing this fiendish wrong, adding to it another,—turning his "infinite wrath" upon his sinless son, and having to be bought by blood to cease cursing his children; when bought, still continuing to curse most of them; saving only such as heard of the scheme, and of the hearers only such as were credulous enough to believe it, and of the believers only such as he had elected; being pleased to ordain all the rest to eternal torment;—a God of infinite wickedness, and then wanting to be praised for it. Such is the being whom Jesus called "our father" and John defined as "love," according to that Confession which Dr. Crosby says all the preachers and people in his denomination accept. Where is the piety in a theology which so blackens creation and blasphemes its creator, and which is built upon the doctrine of the total depravity of man and of God! Let us thank a better God, that so many men are not depraved enough to believe it! For almost if not quite as bad as the insincerity which rots religion by professing without belief, is the sincerity which profanes it by such beliefs.

All welcome then to the New Orthodoxy! Success to its efforts to make believers doubt their bad beliefs, and to give doubters doctrines which they need not doubt! All hail to the movements, under whatever name, that seek to make theology broad enough to hold all honest thought, and good enough to glorify God and harmonize men,—to make religion sound with sincerity, and sweet with sentiments of reverence and love.

But there is a common criticism that the New Orthodoxy does not meet the want. Some charge it with being not yet quite sincere, and with at any rate trying to compromise between the old and new thought.

To the charge of insincerity, I shall pay no attention. We must not always call a man insincere because he professes contradictory opinions. Emerson suspected an Englishman has a valve in his brain, so that while he expresses the most advanced opinions about everything else, still the moment the conversation approaches the English church, he "shuts down the valve," and after that "you talk with a box turtle." Some men seem to have the valve kept shut and rusted, so that the ideas that fill their other thought filter into their theology but slowly, and they can carry the science of the nineteenth century and the superstitions of the sixteenth without discovering any inconsistency. Doubtless there are some

dishonest men in the New Orthodoxy as everywhere else; but I am ready to believe that most of its movers are sincere.

And if they are disposed to compromise, this is wise. We want some uncompromising men, like Wendell Phillips; but a world of such would not work well, and a church of them would soon show as many parties as pews. We live by compromise, and allow some errors for the sake of harmony. Right and truth are sacred words, but peace and mercy no less so. The Psalmist wisely pictures the perfect state as one where "mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Stern right brings but half of heaven, and more beautiful peace must embrace it as a bride; and the best worship is ever the wedding of truth and tenderness. Religion means a binding, and should bind men in the spirit of compromise and charity. Sincerity does not mean severity, nor does honesty bid you stop every fool you meet, either of the conservative or radical class, and tell him just what you think of him or his creed. Charity often lays its finger on its lips; and religion, if it tells no lies, will still be ready to listen to a good many for the larger harmony.

We may learn a lesson from our new system of time-keeping. Every watch in the audience carries a lie on its face, and except on the ninetieth meridian all the time in the Mississippi Valley is wrong,—from Cincinnati, which is nearly half an hour slow, to Omaha, which is as much too fast. With all our science, we live by a lie and prefer to for greater harmony. So in religious matters;—men live in different mental longitudes, and the sun has risen higher in some minds than others. So long as men live by the sun and natural religion, they need not adjust this difference. But if they are to have organized religion and work therein in concert; if they are to keep creeds as well as clocks, and confessions as well as chronometers,—both must depart somewhat from the truth and carry some lies on their faces. The new time wisely says,—let Cincinnati and Omaha and all between cease to be so scrupulous about the stars, and compromise on that mid-meridian. And the New Orthodoxy will as wisely say, let conservative and progressive soften their scruples, and agree on middle ground, and sacrifice precision to peace.

But the same simile suggests the way of securing harmony. The new time abandons the local centers that brought confusion, for a few well marked meridians. And the New Orthodoxy should abandon the special doctrinal points that brought discord and were but local in religion, and should proclaim the great principles that run through all religions as the parallels through all zones. Leaving disputed doctrines about divine mysteries, it should assert human justice and the charity that bends justice in more beautiful circle and binds men in unity as meridians do the lands. By proclaiming these principles which run through all history and hearts, and which though human are divine and point to God as the parallels do to the pole;—the New Orthodoxy could give men a religious time which would unite them more broadly, and by which all the trains of modern thought could run without collision.

Here seems its deficiency. It neglects these principles, and seeks to regulate religion by correcting the old doctrinal points. Take for instance the new Congregational Creed. Though the New York *Independent* praises this for getting "as far as possible out of the region of theology," it still says nothing about the broad religion of justice and love which Jesus taught, but is all devoted to the doctrines which he did not teach. It does indeed soften their old severity by using weaker words and ambiguous phrases,—so that Joseph Cook calls it a "fast and loose compromise" and a "tissue of latitudinarian loopholes." But it still keeps them all. It asserts a "supernatural revelation" "to a chosen people," and calls the Bible "the authoritative stand-

ard" for religious teaching and human conduct; it says "our first parents by disobedience fell under the righteous condemnation of God," from whom all men are "alienated;" it says that Christ, though the creator of all things, was yet sacrificed "for the sins of the world," and that this sacrifice "is the sole and sufficient ground of forgiveness and reconciliation with" God; and it again affirms "everlasting punishment."

Now the attempt to save and reform these doctrines seems hardly wise, and the New Orthodoxy will not be new enough until it abandons them. When the Russian engineer laid out a railroad from St. Petersburg to Moscow, winding this way and that to take in some old town; the Emperor laying a ruler on the map drew the line straight, saying "build the road there." Religion should lay out its lines as royally, and not turn out so much to include old dogmas that will only delay and dishonor it. Against honest conservatism in itself we have nothing to say,—though as extreme as the man who was so attached to the old moon that he always opposed the new. But when one has decided to follow the new moon, it is as well to give up the old; and those who accept modern thought, may better abandon many of these mediæval doctrines.

What but harm comes from the attempt to keep that old theory about the Bible and to reconcile it with modern discovery! The Bible commands our respect, and would not be attacked by Mr. Ingersoll himself, if the church did not make such claims about it. And all attempts to isolate the Bible as the only and ended "word of God," or as "the authoritative standard," only hides the holier truth that God still lives and still lifts his "standard" in human reason and conscience, and never ends his "word," but adds for each generation and nation the sentences they need, and in the growth of knowledge and thought and love is still writing the eternal Bible that grows better from age to age.

The attempt to retain many other doctrines is quite as unreasonable and sometimes still less religious. Why keep, even in ambiguous phrases, that doctrine of Christ's blood shed to satisfy God's justice,—when Christ never taught it, and when it would be so false to justice and disgraceful to God, if he had! Dr. Bushnell has indeed pressed fine meanings into this doctrine; and we all confess that sacrifice is divine in Jesus and every man, and that all love is vicarious and suffers for others. But to link these lofty truths to the old cannibal notions of a God wanting blood, or with the Calvinistic doctrine of a God of wrath, only degrades them and our thought of Deity. Such doctrines cannot be reformed and renewed. To glue last year's foliage to the trees will not make it grow again; and the new sap would circulate quite as freely through old leaves as the new thought through some of these old beliefs. Nature says these May days, let both go, for better are growing. Jesus himself cautioned men against patching old religious garments lest it rend them worse, and against filling the old bottles lest they burst. To stitch modern science into mediæval superstitions often leaves them raggeder than before, and some of the old theological bottles were burst before our reformers began to fill them. I saw an old man moving, and, with a conservatism that was natural but not wise, carrying jugs and jars that had lost their bottoms ten years before. Much of the old theological ware is broken past cure, and it seems as if the new Congregational creed is moving too much of it. That doctrine of Adam's fall cannot be mended. Indeed when the fall has gone, and Adam gone also, there seems nothing left to mend. The doctrine is reduced to the state pictured in the oriental expression of a cipher with the rim removed, and the time for repair is past. The cooper of the story endured patiently while old casks were brought to have new hoops put on them, and old hoops to have new casks put in them; but when

an old bunghole was brought to be made into a new barrel, he protested. And when the doctrine of Adam's fall is reduced to the same tenuity, reason has a right to protest against its reconstruction as a foundation for religion. At any rate, religion ought to protest against it and all derived from it. That series, from man's "utter depravity" in this world, to his "everlasting punishment" in another, are not only false but profane. Theology ought not only to retract them, but to repent in sackcloth and ashes for having taught them. And the greatest service the New Orthodoxy can render religion, will be not to renew but to refute them, not to broaden but to bury them.

Nor is such work destructive and negative in its nature as so often charged. It clears the field for a better growth,—rather reveals a better already there. Those old doctrines were often restrictions and sometimes even negations, which however necessary and good in their time are no longer so. The old theology even in asserting grand truths, beset them with narrow limitations, and so often denied more than it affirmed. Hear its limiting words: the true religion only one in many; God's word only one book; his prophets few; his messiah only one; his son single; his saints scarce. Hear its negations: God's crowning work and very image not able to stand, falling, good for nothing; his highest creation cursed, worse than nothing;—these negations culminating in "eternal punishment," which is a worse denial of good and of God than atheism ever made. True piety to-day will gladly destroy these limitations and negations, to let in the larger truth that has dawned in the world. For truth is best symbolized by the light, which only asks to have the curtain lifted and come in. In darker ages it may have been well for the church to bar its windows and draw its light from the oil accumulated in old centuries, and for preachers to extract gas from the sulphur-laden strata of reptilian times. But to-day the sun is up, and makes such sermons look paler than the street lamps which the watchman forgets to turn out in the morning. As Lessing said, the prayer for light is answered by opening our eyes. Let the church take away these *nots* which are but as shutters, and widen these *onlys* which were but the narrow windows for a castled faith to fight through; and admit the light of nature and heaven and God, which fills the solar system and waits to fill the soul with sunshine if we will give it a chance. And let the church look out of the window, and see the life of nature bursting into beauty and blessing everywhere. Away up in Minnesota on the mid-line between the equator and the pole, I found this spring over fifty species of wild flowers in bloom before the snow was gone; and the fields were purple with pulsatillas a week before Easter. Snow and sin are indeed facts; but spring is a larger fact in soil and soul alike; and society is ever blossoming with more beauty than May. Depraved though it be, human nature is sown with seeds of good, and virtues grow like violets from the darkest soil; and everywhere love is lifting life to a heaven here that gives better promise of one beyond than any Easter flowers or fancies. In this natural light and life and love, God lives and religion lasts and we shall not lose it.

Let us boldly break through its limitations into its boundless truths. Instead of one small book, let us see the infinite Scripture reaching from its Genesis in suns to its Revelation in souls,—a Bible in which all truth is the Law, and all human hopes are Prophets, and all loves are the Psalms, and all goodness is a Gospel. Instead of a fatal fall, let us see the hopeful rise of man; and instead of the soul's depravity, its divinity. Instead of one only son of God, let us, as he did, give the name to all who work for peace and good. Instead of one sacrifice which is "the sole ground of reconciliation with

God;" let us see the millions of men who sacrifice themselves for others with a love that comes from a God who needs no reconciliation. Instead of defining this God and so denying his infinity, let us humbly confess that he is greater than any confession has declared or can,—a Power in whom we and all worlds "live and move and have our being." But though too far to find, a God too near to lose,—above all and in all and through us all; and living most of all in Love,—"whoso loveth another, dwelleth in God and God in him." So we reach the poets creed, better than Athanasian or Apostles':—

"I believe in Love renewing
All that sin hath swept away;
Leaven-like its way pursuing,
Night by night and day by day;
In the power of its remolding,
In the grace of its reprieve,
In the glory of beholding
Its perfection, I believe.

"I believe in Love Eternal
Fixed in God's unchanging will,
That, beneath the deep infernal,
Hath a deep that's deeper still;
In its patience, its endurance,
To forbear and to retrive,
In the large and full assurance
Of its triumph, I believe."

If the New Orthodoxy will plant itself on this principle, it will indeed be a true orthodoxy of right doctrine. And it will give us a confession of faith, broad enough to unite all religions and races, true enough for the coming centuries to continue to sign with sincerity, and lofty enough to inspire the world to work and worship.

II.

AN EXTEMPORE ADDRESS, BY REV. H. W. THOMAS, D.D.

Delivered at the Western Conference in response to the paper by Rev. H. M. Simmons on the New Orthodoxy. Phonographically reported by Mrs. Isabel C. Barrows for the *Christian Register*.

In reference to the new Congregational creed, while as a public document it is entirely proper to discuss it here, I am not its apologist nor its defender. I think it may assuredly be set down as an advance, but I think that it is probably liable to the criticism that it is in a sense a compromise creed. I think it was intended to be so. I do not think that it was intended to represent the individual opinions of any section or even any one of the members of the council. It was rather to hold the church together and to prevent another split. Hence I think it intentionally presents two phases or two sides: one looking backwards, so that the more conservative may say, "I can take that;" the other looking forward, so that the more progressive can say, "We can take that." And you know it has come to be the case that, if we are allowed to interpret a document and put a meaning into it, we can almost any of us take anything; but, as I understand the new creed, it does not, in any full sense, voice what is called progressive Orthodoxy. It is not an attempt to give a full expression to the new theology. Nor do I know any one who is authorized to express, except for himself, what the new theology is or what is really progressive Orthodoxy.

As I understand the New Orthodoxy, it is in no sense a compromise movement. The men who claim to represent it are not compromise men, nor do they claim to be aggressive men nor conservative men nor peace men nor fighting men. The very animus of the new theology is a desire to know the real truth; and its further animus is that theology, like other things, is progressive, and in the nature of the case can hardly have received its fullest and final expression two or three hundred years ago, when the creeds were framed. Now, while we call this the new theology, we can use that term only in a relative sense. We use it only for the purpose of definition, for really it is the old Orthodoxy. It is a movement backward to the time and truth of the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, rather than a movement from them. When the reformers entered the field some four hundred years ago, they naturally enough, in looking around for a support, took up the writings of the Latin bishop Augustine. They found in him a presentation of the theology that seemed to suit them better than anything else, and it became their best weapon of defense and offense. And it is not strange that the theology since the Reformation has been largely colored by the direction that it took at the time of the Reformation, and that the thought should have been colored by the writings of the fifth century.

Now, what is this new movement? It is not a going back to the Reformation, it is not a going back to the days of Augustine; but it is a movement of thought going back to the time of Christ. It is an effort to find out what Christ taught. It is a Christianity, I may say, rather than even a Paulinity; a Christism rather than a Paulism. All you as theologians know that the great questions of theology have not come from the teachings of Christ

nearly so much as from the teachings of Paul. I suppose it is generally admitted now that many of the old positions are no longer tenable. Many of them, we may say, are moribund, they are dying.

The peculiar shape that theology took in the time of the earlier councils was built upon the foundation of the fall of man in Adam,—the fall of the race in Adam, the depravity and the guilt of the race. Now, upon this was attempted to be built a doctrine of atonement, of reconciliation. It first took the shape of the question how to get man away from the devil. After they found out that there was not so much in that as they had supposed, then the question rose how to reconcile God. They supposed God was angry and needed to be reconciled. Then it shaped itself a little differently, how to reconcile or satisfy justice. The law had been broken: the word had been said,—The soul that sinneth it shall die. Some one had sinned: the race had sinned in this one, and the race must die, or some one else must die; and the doctrine of substitutional or penal atonement was built upon that. They could enforce such a doctrine as that in old times, because men possessed arbitrary power. Kings could say and do what they pleased. But, as the moral consciousness of men unfolded, then came the thought that the higher one was, the better he should be. It was natural to carry that up to God, and say that God should be the best. Hence, the foundations of the old theory began to give way, in the moral sense of mankind.

Then it was ascertained that Adam was not the first man. Hardly any one questions that now. The origin of the race is lost in obscurity, and it is accepted by many that there never was any such catastrophe as the fall of man. Now, the effect of this is to take away the foundation on which thirteen hundred years of thinking has rested; and to take away the foundation on which the old theology has rested from the days of Augustine, I confess to you, is a very strange spectacle. Men are beginning to say Adam was not the first man, the race did not fall. Now we go back to the teachings of Christ, and what do we find? We find that Christ never indorsed the fall of man. We find that Christ never quoted the second chapter of Genesis: he quoted from the first chapter of Genesis, "In the beginning male and female created he *them*." And, when we look at that second chapter, it is, to say the least, legendary in its look, if not mythical, or possibly one of Dr. Curry's fables.

Now, the question is, Where are we, the men that claim to be orthodox, as I do,—not in the old sense of orthodox, however,—where are we? What have we behind us? We are left right here. The race is as it is. If it did not begin away up in the clouds and fall down, as we suppose it did not, it began down here in the dust where God says it began, and it has been building up. If there was no such catastrophe as the fall of man in Adam, there is the Garden of Eden out of which each child of the human family sometime wanders. If there is no such thing as original depravity in the sense theologians think, yet there is such a thing as an acquired depravity among men, a bad use of their powers; and this, along with the laws of heredity, we suppose to be transmissible as a weakness, a tendency, but not a guilt. Now, the question comes in, What need of an atonement, if there was no fall? But I still believe in the atonement, and the new Orthodoxy believes it; but we believe in it differently from the old. There is just this need for it, first in the heart of God himself and second in the race. The central truth must be love. That is the great fact,—God's love. Now, we know that all love is in its nature vicarious. I use the word in its strict meaning. It puts itself in the place of another. All human love in its very essence carries a burden. It carries a cross of suffering. It carries in a sense a Calvary. Every mother carries it in her heart for her child; and we might

even say, figuratively, it is from everlasting in her, from the beginning. She anticipates any sin her child may commit. Every father carries that element of sacrifice. Every patriot carries it, every philanthropist carries it. It is the crown of God in man, and what must it be in God himself?

The new theology, or Orthodoxy, emphasizes the fatherhood of God. He is the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and he loves all mankind. God loves the world as much as Christ could love it; and he did not need to be bought over to love it, but the love of God came in Christ. The new theology finds here the essence of the atonement in the suffering of love to save. Jesus Christ illustrates this in parable, in discourse, in the story of the prodigal son, in the chapter telling of the shepherd going after the lost sheep, and hunting until he found it. The new theology believes, at least I believe, that while God was not in any such sense angry that he could not love the child, yet as a righteous father he cannot forgive the impenitent, and never does forgive the impenitent. When the prodigal comes home, then he receives him. We, as parents, know that, if we find our children wrong, we cannot say, "That is all right." We have got to forgive them in a way that they will not go astray again, if possible.

Now, how are we to reconcile this ethical sense, this sense of right and justice within us? How are we to reach our children, and win them back? We do both through suffering. We suffer for our children. We put ourselves into their condition; and our suffering for them awakens their sense of wrong, and leads them to suffer because they have done wrong, and thus, through the suffering of love, they are brought to penitence and atonement, and reconciliation is effected.

That, as I understand it, is the position of the new Orthodoxy; and I am free to say, and to emphasize it, that it is no compromise. It is, as I believe, God's everlasting truth. And I tell you, further, while we may not be able to define it exactly in our poor human words and thoughts, there is the centre, the field where the truth is; and there is the practical power of the atonement which puts the cross of Christ into every human heart. It puts the mind that was in Christ in us; and it carries us right back into this law of suffering for others, and into the great law of harmony, the harmony of love. That is going to be the faith of the future: it must be. I feel it just as surely as the sun shines, that the doctrine of the suffering of love to save is not only to be the theoretical truth of the future, but it is to be the great moral working power; and instead of men getting out of sin by a bankrupt act,—for the old theology will certainly bear that construction,—or putting their sins on somebody else, and reaping the benefit of that act, the minute before they die or at any time,—instead of that it teaches that the man that sins must suffer, and that he will never be forgiven until he is heartily sorry for sin; that man is not to be afraid of hell, but afraid of sin. Instead of being forgiven on the ground that the penalty has been paid by some one else, it teaches that men are forgiven on the ground of the Father's mercy. There is no doubt that is the truth. I tell you, when you get to that, that the whole of the prophets run in that line, that thought. I believe that Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Isaiah would have stood utterly amazed at the theology that has been taught since the Reformation, and at the thought of a substitutional atonement; at such a justification by faith, that you had only to believe that some one else had paid the debt instead of you! The old prophets saw better, and Christ saw better. Christ taught the true doctrine of the forgiveness of sin, because men are sorry for sin and want to do right.

Then the new theology believes in the profoundest sense in the doctrine of regeneration, or whatever phrase you use

to explain that. It believes that, in the coming of the love of God into the heart of man, man is carried into the nature of God. It believes we are made partakers of the divine nature; that we are in the image of God, to begin with, but that now we are renewed and quickened, and made more fully alive.

It believes that the law is not written on tables of stone alone, but that it is written on the tables of the heart; that men should love right because it is right, and truth because it is truth; that they should be just as afraid to sin if they knew there is no hell as if they believed in the old literal hell. Ay, it is that doctrine of fatherhood and sonship carried through suffering into the human heart that makes one feel in regard to God, and all that is good, as a loving daughter or son feels to the memory of a buried mother or father. It is a bond that will hold people.

Now, of course, we all understand that there are but three pivotal points in theology: everything hinges upon these. The New Orthodoxy does not hold at all to the old doctrine of verbal or plenary inspiration, nor does it give up the truth that men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It believes that in the Scriptures we find the will of God revealed. It believes that in Jesus Christ, God spake to us. It believes that that was the truth of God. It does not believe that this was never spoken by any one else or anywhere else. It recognizes divine truth wherever it comes. This New Orthodoxy believes in a continuous revelation, a continuous inspiration; that God did not close his lips two thousand years ago; that the books were not sealed, but that God is immanent now, speaking to human hearts; that he has been in the world from the beginning, leading and teaching the human family.

Now, in reference to the future, the other point so much in debate, the new theology, or Orthodoxy, recognizes the fact of future punishment; that, in the nature of things, sin and suffering go together. If men do wrong, they must suffer. It believes that the same laws are carried over to the next life. The New Orthodoxy does not limit the time of man's improvement to the present state. It does not see why time limit should come in. It does not see why world limit should come in. It looks upon all men as being in eternity now as much as they ever will be. We are in God's universe, and there is no way to get out of it. It recognizes the sameness of law everywhere, with God's love from everlasting to everlasting; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

It believes that these redemptive or helpful or saving or educational movements, or whatever terms you use, go on into the future. It does not sentence all souls to the same term of punishment. It is a singular thing in the old Orthodoxy that it has the same term for every sin. Here is a girl of fifteen or sixteen who dies unconverted: she goes into endless punishment, gets the full term. Here is a sinner seventy years old: you cannot sentence him for any longer term. The New Orthodoxy does not believe in that; it believes that punishment is only the other side of love. It is love seeking to save. It is correction, it is discipline, it is a form of education. The New Orthodoxy believes that souls will suffer just as long as it is necessary for them to suffer, and no longer; and, in the nature of the case, this becomes the doctrine of eternal hope. There may be always suffering in the universe, for creation will possibly go on forever, and souls will forever be under the process of education, and in that process they may lapse into the wrong; yet the New Orthodoxy does not teach that any single soul will be endlessly lost.

That, as I understand it, is the outline of the new theology. As such, I do not think it is a compromise; and that is where, in my honest judgment, we will all have to come. I know there are two extremes. There is the extreme Orthodoxy: fifty thousand preachers

hitched up and pulling back to keep the world from theologically moving forward, and a much less number than that running away out to the other extreme. I believe that the younger clergy of the East, a good many of the Universalists and Unitarians, who have not been students of the old philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Hegel, Kant, but students rather of the modern philosophers, will find out after awhile that they have gone in at the wrong gate, and are on the wrong road. Any man who goes in at that gate has got to come out at the other side, or turn around and come back.

That is the only logical conclusion, if men have but courage to follow it out. I do not believe the people want to go into agnosticism. They do not want to go into materialism. There is something of God within them that tells them of something better. But logic is relentless. Lay down your premises, and you have got to follow them to their conclusions or back out.

Many of the young clergy are on a material basis. The world is not going with the old conservative Orthodoxy, it cannot. The world can no longer, with open eyes, believe in verbal inspiration of Scriptures. It can no longer believe that the race fell and sinned in Adam. It can no longer believe in God as good, and a substitutional atonement and endless punishment, as has been taught. Between these two here is the middle ground, recognizing spirit, recognizing inspiration, recognizing divinity within us and above us, recognizing the immanency, the presence, the power of God,—a spiritual religion. I say to you, dear friends, it is with this that the people of this age need to be fed. They cannot live on debate, they cannot live on doubt. Oh, my God, when I look through this place where I have been laboring for fifteen years, and see the want of this great city, and the want of this struggling age, I feel that what we need is spiritual power, heart work, practical work, something to gather the people in. Men want to believe in God. They want to believe in the future. God has been so taught that many have ceased to believe in him. Christ has been so phrased that many have been repelled. But I have faith that, if we could only catch a glimpse of God as he is, and tell of Christ as he is, men would be drawn to the beauty of love and the beauty of righteousness. This is the great work of this age. I know that the liberal churches had to debate a long while. They had to fight because every man fought them. We know well enough the early days of the Unitarians and Universalists. They had to fight their ground, and there will be a meed of praise awarded them in history for it. But we cannot build churches on that alone. The time has come when God will help any one of us to bring life and sweetness into the congregations. This is what we want. I say, All hail to Darwin, to Herbert Spencer, to every one who has the truth! But I tell you we want more than reason and philosophy in our churches: we want enthusiasm and spirit and love. I hail you as brothers and sisters, as workers in this cause. We do not sufficiently estimate the work we have to do in this great country for the millions here, and the millions that are coming. What we want is a humanity as broad as the Son of God, a love as divine as God, as tender and as human as can be in the hearts of fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters.

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